

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 SP-02 SS-15
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3383
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
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AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY NICOSIA
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
USUN NEW YORK 5718
USMISSION SINAI

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3.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB ECON IS
SUBJECT: GOVERNMENT CONTINUES TO BUY OFF TROUBLESOME TRADE UNION
GROUPS

1. THE CIVIL SERVICE UNION RECENTLY RENEWED ITS STRIKE THREAT.
THIS MILITANCY WAS PROVOKED BY THE INSISTENCE OF THE CIVIL
SERVICE COMMISSIONER THAT A SALARY ADVANCE OF 75 PERCENT BE
MADE CONDITIONAL ON THE UNION'S RENUNCIATION OF THE SUMMER HOUR
SYSTEM. THE UNION CLAIMED THAT THE WAGE AGREEMENT BETWEEN FINANCE
MINISTER EHRLICH AND HISTADRUT SECRETARY GENERAL MESHEL WAS
UNCONDITIONAL. A CABINET COMMITTEE ON WAGES MET ON MAY 29,
BACKED THE CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSIONER AND DEMANDED A NO-STRIKE
PLEDGE UNTIL DECEMBER.

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2. HOWEVER, FEARING THAT A REFUSAL OF THE INCREASE WOULD UNLEASH
A NEW WAVE OF STRIKES THROUGHOUT THE PUBLIC SECTOR, THE GOVERNMENT
REVERSED ITS DECISION. IT AGREED THAT THE ADVANCE WILL NOW BE
PAID, PROVIDED THE UNIONS ARE WILLING TO NEGOTIATE THE QUESTION
OF SUMMER HOURS AND PROMISE NOT TO STRIKE BEFORE SEPTEMBER
1, ONE MONTH BEFORE THE NEW COST OF LIVING ADJUSTMENTS ARE DUE.
THE CIVIL SERVICE UNION, IN TURN, THEN CALLED OFF THE STRIKE THREAT.

THE ONLY MAJOR STRIKE POSSIBILITY NOW IS THAT OF THE POSTAL WORKERS, WHO INSIST ON EXEMPTION FROM THE CIVIL SERVICE SALARY SYSTEM AND A 40 PERCENT WAGE INCREASE. THIS DEMAND IS BASED ON AN ARBITRATION AWARD THAT THEY ARE ENTITLED TO THE SAME SALARY BENEFITS AS THE AIRPORT AUTHORITY EMPLOYEES, WHO RECEIVED A 40 PERCENT INCREASE IN DECEMBER 1977.

3. COMMENT ONCE AGAIN THE GOVERNMENT HAS GIVEN IN TO LABOR DEMANDS EXCEEDING ITS GENERAL GUIDELINES WITH THE HISTADRUT RATHER THAN A FACE A STRIKE. EHRLICH HAS CALCULATED THAT THE POLITICAL COSTS OF BITTER FIGHTS WITH CIVIL SERVICE UNIONS WOULD OWEIGH THE BENEFITS OF EVENTUAL SETTLEMENT ON TERMS SLIGHTLY MORE FAVORABLE TO THE GOVERNMENT. WITH AN INFLATION RATE WHICH MIGHT REACH 40 PER CENT AND A HUGE BUDGET DEFICIT, THE IMPACT ON THE OVERALL ECONOMIC SITUATION OF THESE DEALS IS MINIMAL. IT DOES, HOWEVER, REINFORCE THE INFLATIONARY PSYCHOLOGY OF THE COUNTRY AND AN "I'M ALL RIGHT, JACK" ATTITUDE.
LEWIS

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